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Here's what you're entitled to if you're involuntarily bumped from a flight



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- Depending on the delay, it could be entitled to as much as \$1,350.
- Department of Transportation rules require cash compensation.
- There are a host of exceptions.

Kelli B. Grant | [@kelligrant](#)

Wednesday, 12 Apr 2017 | 12:07 PM ET

The odds of getting involuntarily bumped from an airline flight are slim, but it pays to know your rights.

In 2015, just 0.09 percent of passengers in the U.S. were denied [boarding](#), according to Bureau of Transportation Statistics.





Man forcibly removed from United Airlines flight

Monday, 10 Apr 2017 | 12:38 PM ET | 01:19

"It's fairly rare to be involuntarily bumped," said George Hobica, publisher of travel site AirfareWatchdog.com. "But if it happens to you, it's a big deal."

The renewed attention on the rules comes in the wake of an incident on a United Express flight earlier this week when a seated passenger **was forcibly removed from the plane** and sparked a national outcry.

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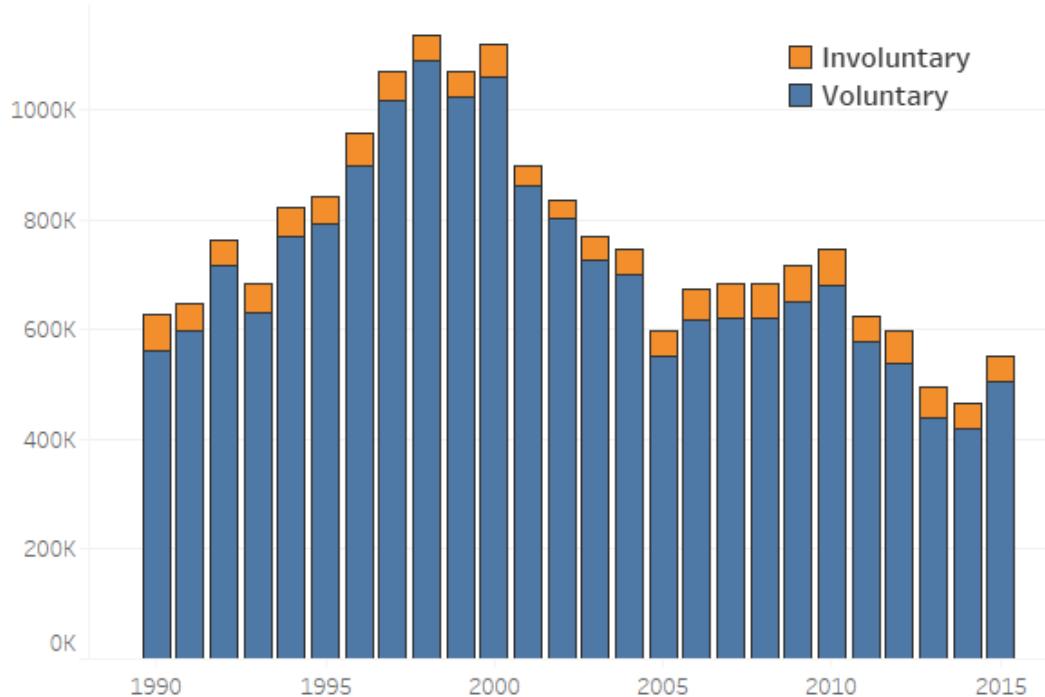
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Here's how many U.S. airline passengers have been bumped from oversold flights in the last 25 years.
(SOURCE: DOT)



What you're owed

Under [Department of Transportation rules](#), the compensation you're entitled to for being involuntarily bumped from a flight varies by the extent of the delay:

- If the airline can make alternate arrangements that get you to your final destination within ~~one hour of your original arrival time~~, no compensation is required



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your one-way fare, up to a maximum \$675.

- More than two hours later than your original arrival time on domestic flights, or more than four hours late on international flights: 400 percent of your one-way fare, up to a maximum \$1,350.

"If your ticket does not show a fare (for example, a frequent flyer award ticket or a ticket issued by a consolidator), your denied boarding compensation is based on the lowest cash, check or credit card payment charged for a ticket in the same class of service (e.g., coach, first class) on that flight," according to the rules.

Airlines are required to pay out that compensation in cash, Hobica said.

"It's fairly rare to be involuntarily bumped. But if it happens to you, it's a big deal."

-George Hobica, publisher, AirfareWatchdog.com

That amount is in addition to the value of your original ticket — which could be used to take that alternate flight the airline is offering. Or, if your trip is sunk due to the bumping, you can request a so-called involuntary refund. The airline also must refund you for any extras purchased on the original flight, such as seat selection or checked baggage, per Department of Transportation rules.

"The denied boarding compensation is essentially a payment for your inconvenience," the DOT site



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An officer from the Transportation Security Administration checks travel documents for passengers traveling through Reagan National Airport in Arlington, Virginia.

(But if you're involuntarily bumped, you have lost your shot at any perks or compensation the airline had on offer for volunteers giving up their seat, Hobica said.)

Rule exceptions

Of course, the rules are loaded with fine print. They don't apply on aircraft that hold fewer than 30 passengers, charter flights or inbound international flights, for example. Nor are airlines required to offer compensation if the involuntary bump is a result of them substituting a smaller aircraft or (on flights with 30 to 60 passengers) a safety-related weight or balance issue.

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KIM B. CRANT



Personal Finance and Consumer Spending Reporter



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